

Enoch Beeman: Life-Long Free Methodist and Maintenance Man Extraordinaire

by Andrea Anibal



Enoch Beeman takes a break from working outside the Free Methodist World Ministries Center on a sunny fall day.

"Enoch could probably use that," is a time-honored phrase at the Free Methodist World Ministries Center.

Seemingly useless cords, blocks of wood, computer parts and dozens of other odds and ends have been redeemed to usefulness by this 68-year-old, lifetime veteran of Free Methodism. As laugh-lines start to crinkle around the far-off look in his blue eyes, it's easy to imagine the inside of his memory looking like one of the many storage closets where his salvaged items are tucked away.

Enoch J Beeman was born in 1933, the fifth child of Joseph E. and Margie Beeman. Joseph named his new son Enoch after his own middle name, which he had gone by until timecards at a factory dictated that he be called by his first name. After that, everyone called him Joe, and he was determined that his son would keep the name he had lost.

Back then, Joe Beeman was a Free Methodist pastor making \$3.65 per week. From the time Enoch was born until 1949, he pastored four churches, two of them three-point circuits. Eventually, the family house in Ionia, MI, was sold and the profits eaten up with raising a family of five. By the time he retired from the ministry, physically exhausted and close to a nervous break, "he didn't have two nickels to rub together," Enoch recalls.



Necessity: the Mother of Invention

After his father's retirement, Enoch and his parents moved to a farm outside of Mt. Pleasant, where they planned to gut and refurbish the old house that stood on the property. The problem: Joe was blind in one eye and had no depth perception. One day he handed Enoch, who had just finished 10th grade, a small, paperback book called *Wiring Simplified*, and said, "Son, you're going to wire this house." That winter, they dug a basement, stripped the house of plaster, wired it, moved it across the road, sheetrocked the walls and even topped it off with a new metal roof. "He didn't know it, but he was a general contractor!" Enoch laughs.

Enoch recalls his final push toward becoming a do-it-yourselfer. His father sent

him to the local garage to have the transmission of their car repaired. The mechanics "took him to the cleaners" for a five-minute job that required only one small tool. "Almost ever since, if I didn't have the tool, I'd go buy it," he says.

After graduating, Enoch went to work for a local electrician who treated him well. For the next nine months he made \$1.35 an hour and got a basic education in electrical wiring. His boss realized Enoch's worth early and offered to help him get his license and put him in charge of a crew. Enoch was too humble to accept, and he never got the chance. The U.S. was involved in Korea at the time, and he was soon drafted into service at Fort Knox.

After basic training, Enoch was sent to the Field Communications Chief School at Fort Benning. He recalls the extreme anxiety he felt about the possibility of going to Korea. But "my mother wasn't just worrying about it. She was praying," he says with a smile. After completing the school, he was one of 11 men who didn't receive orders to head overseas. He stayed at Fort Benning as Assistant Instructor for the course until the end of his two years of active duty. He remained active in military reserve for eight more years.

Meeting His Match

One day when Enoch was home on leave, he and his mother went to a revival meeting at a small one-room school to visit with some of their friends. At the meeting, a beautiful girl was sitting on the piano bench playing the accordin. Her name was Winnie, and she was 14 at the time. Enoch recalls thinking, "Wow, I wish she'd go home and grow up." He didn't know it, but Winnie had the same feelings for him, and she started praying about it. No matter how nice the girls he dated in the coming months were, nothing ever seemed to work out!

After he returned from Fort Benning a few years later, his cousins stopped by to see if he wanted to go to a camp meeting, and there was an incentive — Winnie would be going with them. After some ribbing from his cousins — much to Winnie's embarrassment — they were on their way. The two soon started dating and eventually ended up at Michigan State University in Lansing, he for electrical engineering and she for nursing. When Winnie hinted that Sparrow Hospital was accepting married students, they decided to start their life together on December 20, 1958.

Yielding to the Call

Although he was doing well in his classes, Enoch couldn't get rid of a nagging feeling in the back of his mind that the Lord might be calling him to the ministry. He had been helping his father build a house, so the opportunity arose for he and Winnie to move into the old Mt. Pleasant farmhouse he'd helped remodel. He took a third shift job at a local creamery where he was well-liked by the owner. One night, a man came to the back door of the creamery. It was the Free Methodist superintendent for North Michigan, asking him to consider taking a church. After much thought and prayer, Enoch accepted the call to a tiny church at Carlshend, the

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furthest church north in the Upper Peninsula. He had never preached before. He got a job in a local shoe store and gave his first sermon in the little log church. Winnie led the singing and served as Sunday School superintendent. The Beemans stayed at Carlshend for the next five years, helping to build a church during that time.

After Carlshend, Enoch was appointed to a church in Marion (near Mt. Pleasant) where he spent seven years as pastor. He drove an ambulance on the side, and the Beeman home became one of two focal points for the ambulance service of Osceola county. During this time, Enoch continued his handyman way of life, completing several projects on the church at Marion, including a new roof. He recalls breaking his leg one day and going out to pour new steps the next.

The Move to Indiana

In 1974, Enoch noticed an ad in Light and Life magazine for an assistant engineer for the Light and Life Hour. He was hired for the job by Dr. Robert Andrews, then the director of the program as well as the Department of Evangelism. Enoch and Winnie moved to 1409 Park Ave. in Winona Lake, IN, on August 1st, and he started work the next day. Enoch was in his element working on the Light and Life Hour, and he did so until it last aired in December 1979.

After the Light and Life Hour ended, Enoch faced a crossroads. His daughter, Pam, was already in college and his son, David, wanted to attend Purdue University. With his job at an end, Enoch needed to come up with money for living and tuition. After a three-month stint at Sky Lodge Camp in Wisconsin, he concluded that his heart was still at the Free Methodist Headquarters in Winona Lake. Computers were still in their infancy, but Enoch had been learning about them from one of the technicians at headquarters. He took a job that eventually dumped the responsibility for running the mainframe computer solely on him. "I was pushed off into the deep end, and I learned a lot in a hurry!" he recalls.

A Dream Come True

Ten years passed. The delegates of Free Methodist General Conference decided to move the denominational headquarters to Indianapolis, and Enoch and Winnie decided to move with it. Enoch was used to moving. He'd done it his whole life. But while Winnie stood by him like a trooper, working just as hard as he did in each place, he says she never got used to leaving friends and homes behind. So Enoch was especially pleased to recount the story of how they found Fairhavens, the charming Victorian home/bed and breakfast in Danville, IN, where they currently reside. "Quite simply, it was her dream house, and the Lord let us have it," he recalls with a grin.

Enoch continued to work on the computer and phone systems at the new Free Methodist World Ministries Center (WMC) until 1998, when the maintenance position opened. "It fit like a glove," he recalls. These days you can find Enoch going about his work that takes him into every nook and cranny of the WMC with a spring in his step and a ready smile. When the weather is good, he makes the 12-

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mile trip from Danville wearing a black leather vest on his motorcycle. Although he is ready to retire, he says he'll be content to work until he and Winnie find a buyer for Fairhavens.

The Past and the Future

Enoch Beeman has lived a life dedicated to God, his family and his church. He has stuck with the FMC through many life-changing decisions and has seen his share of turmoil. "There probably isn't anything that can cause a division any quicker than music. ... Unless you pull out a squirt gun and squirt them in the face!" he laughs.

Through it all, though, he still says, "I'm glad I could serve. I'm not sorry. The total picture has been a good one." And though Joe and Margie Beeman did their best to ensure Enoch the legacy of a name, they gave him much more: the gifts of humor, a genuine spirit, integrity, a strong work ethic and spiritual and marital constancy. In turn Enoch has created his own legacy, sharing it with us, and it will be a very long time before anyone at the Free Methodist World Ministries Center forgets his name.